

Montana Height Modernization Strategic Plan Meeting Report

April 30, 2007 10:00 AM to 11:15 AM at Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) headquarters, Helena, Montana. No one attended via phone conferencing.

Participants

____ Dave Davis, MDT
____ Stu Kirkpatrick, DOA
____ Bryce Larsen, MDT
____ Ron Schlagenhauser, Flathead County GIS
____ Curt Smith, NGS
____ Greg Thurston, City of Kalispell
____ R.J. Zimmer, DJ&A

General Agenda

1. Status and New Direction of NGS' Nationalized Height Modernization Program
2. Committee Updates
 - A. Montana Height Modernization Program Plan – Draft
 - B. Montana Height Modernization Pilot Project – Proposal
 - C. Montana Height Modernization Marketing Plan – Draft
 - D. MDT Height Modernization Web Site
 - E. Mark Recovery Program
3. Accomplishments and Outreach
4. Upcoming Events and Target Dates
5. Next Meeting

1. Status Reports

National Height Modernization Program: NGS is working to expand the highly successful Height Modernization Program into a true National Program. Check out the recently updated NGS Web site for Height Modernization at <http://www.ngs.noaa.gov/heightmod/> for more details. This will mean funding for the Height Modernization Program will be directed to NGS through NOAA directly from Congress and will no longer be obtained through Congressional earmarks. This new granting process is currently being addressed by NGS headquarters and details should unfold over the next several months.

Fortunately, we have made good progress towards realizing a Montana Height Modernization Program (MT-HMP) with all our efforts to date. However, our documents will have to be modified slightly to reflect requirements identified in the new Nationalized Program. We will have to shape our Plan to fit within the NGS 10-year plan and NOAA's Strategic Plan – both found as links from the NGS Height Modernization Web page identified above. A link to the granting process is also available.

FY2007 Height modernization funds look like they will be reduced slightly from last year's (FY2006) total of about \$9.5 million. Only states already involved in Height Modernization

Programs will be eligible to apply for grants out of the FY2007 funds. NGS hopes to be able to ask for and get about \$40 million for FY2008. Congressional support for money requested by NGS for the National Program is still as critical as asking for earmarked funds for Montana so we still need to inform and enlist the support of our Congressmen.

The Nationalized Program may possibly be broken into regional areas called Zones to avoid confusion with NOAA's already designated Collaborative Partnership Regions. Montana is currently in the Upper Plains Zone with North and South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado and Iowa. Plans as yet have not been finalized.

Several questions were raised regarding this new granting process. Stu will look into the <http://www.grants.gov/> Web site to try to ascertain the amount of work required to submit a grant for Height Modernization. Curt will communicate with Renee Shields, NGS Height Modernization Coordinator, for answers to our questions and concerns and to status updates for the Nationalized Program and report developments back to the group. Some of the raised concerns were:

When will the grants be awarded?

When all requests for grants are received then all funds distributed at one time?
or When the individual Grant is accepted then funds for that grant distributed?

How long are the grants good for?

How often will we have to reapply for the grant – yearly, bi-yearly, or?

Our thoughts were that it would be better if the grants were for 2 or more years to help plan and maintain the money flow.

What happens to funds if they are not all requested through grant process?

Do unused FY2008 monies roll-over to FY2009?

Should we ask for more money initially as some states will not be prepared to request?

Is there a “sunset” to the Nationalized Program?

Direction and Guidance from MDT: In taking the lead for MT-HMP the MDT should direct how we proceed and what steps should be taken. Bryce Larsen and Dave Davis have planned a meeting with Loran Frazier, MDT Chief Engineer and Engineering Division Administrator, James Walther, MDT Preconstruction Engineer, and Paul Ferry, MDT Highways Engineer, to advise and update them on our current efforts and proposed responsibilities of MDT as described in our Draft MT-HMP Plan. Hopefully, with their support, they will be better equipped to help present our endorsed plan to MDT Director, Jim Lynch. This tentative meeting is scheduled for May 14.

Action item: We need to ascertain the exact role and commitment of MDT to further promote our efforts for MT-HMP.

Letters of Support: Stu Kirkpatrick will re-draft the Letter of Support by May 11 to reflect the new direction of a Nationalized Program. This “boiler plate” letter can be used by agencies/firms/groups to produce their own Letters of Support. The following groups should be targeted to supply Letters of Support:

Montana Governor

Montana Department of Transportation (MDT)

Montana Association of Registered Land Surveyors (MARLS)

Montana Association of Counties (MACO)
Consulting Engineers Council
Montana Land Information Council (MLIC)

2. Committee Updates

A. Montana Height Modernization Program Plan – Draft

Bryce Larsen and Dave Davis reviewed the latest draft of the Montana Height Modernization Program Plan in preparation to present to the Director of MDT. They suggested several edits and clarifications to the Draft Plan which were reviewed and accepted by the Committee.

With the recent change in direction by NGS to a Nationalized Program the Draft Plan will need to be modified slightly so that it aligns itself with the NGS Program and ties to the NOAA goals. R.J. Zimmer and Ron Schlagenhauser will take the lead on reviewing and editing the document as well as updating the one page Executive Summary of the MT-HMP Plan to reflect the changes to a Nationalized Program.

Curt Smith will work with Renee Shields, NGS Height Modernization Coordinator, to ensure our plan works within the NGS design and will share copies of all our updated plans. Renee recently informed Curt that Height Modernization funds were not to be used to create and operate a real time network (RTN) but the infrastructure, such as a densified CORS network, could be built with HM funds.

B. Montana Height Modernization Pilot Project – Proposal

A very good two page Height Modernization Pilot Project was finalized and available. There was no new discussion on pilot projects.

C. Montana Height Modernization Marketing Plan – Draft

The Marketing Plan is in a hold pattern until further direction can be identified.

D. MDT Montana Height Modernization Web Site

The MDT Web site for Height Modernization, <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/heightmod.shtml>, is now listed on the MDT Home page.

Action item: Updated plans, as well as meeting minutes need to be posted so anyone can access them.

E. Mark Recovery Program

This phase of the MT-HMP has begun slowly as some marks are being recovered and updated on the NGS Web site. Dave Davis, Dick Smith and Curt Smith addressed the MARLS Board of Directors and the General Membership meeting at the MARLS Surveyors Conference in Billings, February 28th through March 3rd, about proposed mark recovery by MARLS Chapters and provided update on MT-HMP.

Action item: We still need to address this in a more coordinated effort to minimize duplication.

3. Accomplishments and Outreach

Curt Smith presented Precision Digital Leveling seminar with emphasis on the MT-HMP at the MARLS Surveyors Conference on March 2nd and the two day workshop for the MARLS Western Chapter in Missoula on April 12th and 13th.

Curt Smith presented Montana Height Modernization Program at the Montana Association of Floodplain Managers Conference in Bozeman, April 4th and at the Intermountain GIS Conference in Donnelly, Idaho on April 6th.

Greg Thurston reported that the City of Kalispell now hosts a Web site discussing the MT-HMP and can be found at <http://www.kalispell.com/publicworks/heightModernization.cfm>.

4. Upcoming Events and Target Dates

The next “editions” of MT-HMP Plan, Executive Summary, and Letter of Support will be edited and posted via e-mail for review and comments over the next couple of weeks preferably by the end of May. Document leads are:

MT-HMP Plan and Executive Summary - R.J. Zimmer and Ron Shlagenhauer
Letters of Support – Stu Kirkpatrick

Revise Letter of Support – by May 11

Update Ht Mod Plan to tie into the NGS goals – by end of May

Change Ht Mod Plan VRN references to CORS densification – by end of May

Bryce & Dave meet with MDT Director – by end of May

Revise the Executive Summary – by end of May

June 7 Montana Land Information Council (MLIC) – it’s possible that a Letter of Support could be requested of the Council at this meeting.

Still Pending: Create an informational meeting about Real Time Networks that could be developed in Montana. Enlist the help and direction from Gavin Schrock, who manages the Washington Spatial Reference Network by inviting him to speak somewhere in the state. Todd Ferris will contact Gavin and help develop this meeting.

5. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Montana Height Modernization Executive Committee was not scheduled but will be called for when direction from MDT is determined and as documents and plans are finalized. E-mail communication will continue to prepare documents and plans.

Respectfully submitted,

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